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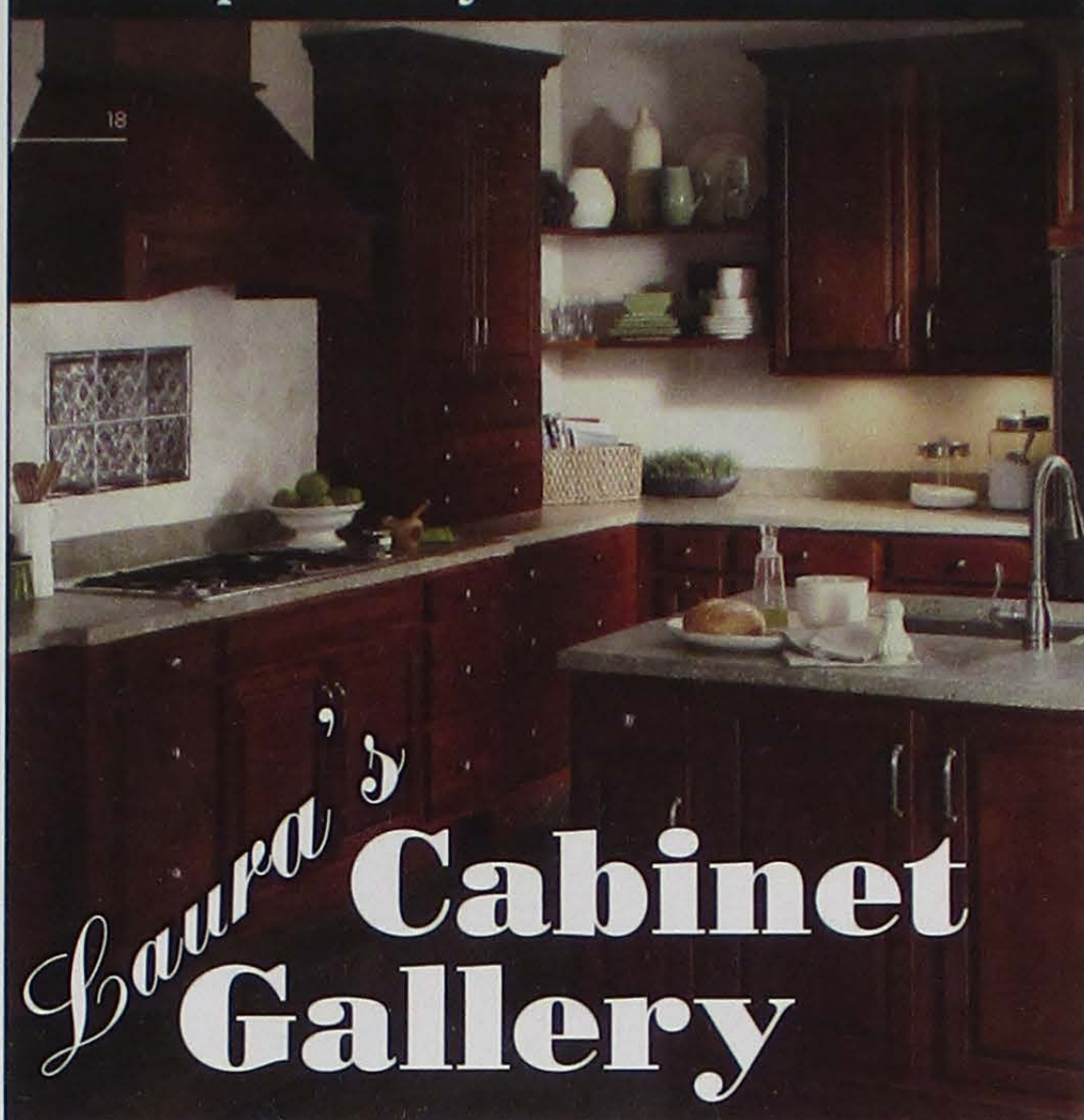
JANUARY 2014

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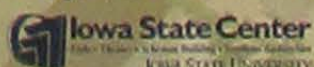
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FACETS IS A MONTHLY PUBLICATION
OF STEPHENS MEDIA IOWA, LLC.

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ON THE COVER: Helen Drake and Rod Simpson share a special bond that goes beyond just skin deep — in fact, it's much deeper than that. To read more, flip to page 6. PHOTO BY NICOLE WIEGAND/FACETS MAGAZINE

EDITOR'S NOTE

I couldn't tell you when it first began, but as far back as I can recall, I've held myself to stupidly high standards.

Most of the time, though, this quirk had nothing to do with the larger things I had going on in my life, like work or final exams. Rather, it was the little things.

Misspelled a word halfway through a page of notes in English class? Better start the whole thing over.

Burned a few cookies after completely forgetting to rotate the sheet pans midway through baking? Yeah, better throw those out before my roommates see.

I guess I must have figured it was a recent phenomenon, but this was quickly countered by something I found during my brief two-day stay at my parents' house over Thanksgiving.

Following the example of my younger siblings who, having endured far too much family time, retired to their rooms with their respective electronic devices, I found myself digging through an old Rubbermaid box of mementos from middle and high school.

Among the dried and crumbling prom corsages, football tickets and notes passed in French class — written in awful French grammar, of course — I found a folded-up list written in pink highlighter.

Across the top was scrawled in loopy, preteen girl handwriting, "New Year's Resolutions: 2002."

And get this: The list was FIVE PAGES LONG. Five pages of things that I, a 12-year-old girl, thought I needed to improve upon.

Some of them made sense, even reading through the list more than a decade later:

Keep my room clean. Read a new book every month. Make the honor roll.

Not so bad for a sixth-grader, right? Well, this is where it gets good.

A little further down the list were listed such insane items as, "Get up at 6 a.m. every morning and run a mile before school," "Give up chocolate," and — this one is the best — "Ask out at least three boys."

(I'll pause here while you finish laughing.)

I'm decently sure that, to this day, I've yet to wake up that early in my life for the sole purpose of physical exertion, have eaten my own weight in chocolate and have yet to ask out a single boy, much less three.



While I'm sure at the time I simply thought I was being ambitious by setting such lofty (and, honestly, ridiculous) goals for myself, all I actually accomplished was compiling a list of things I was never going to achieve.

This isn't to say I don't still make resolutions each January; I've just begun to take a more continuous approach to accomplishing my goals.

While Jan. 1 is as good a day as any to begin anew, there's nothing wrong with starting right away, either.

Rather than focusing on perfection heading into 2014, I've made a promise to myself to make myself better each day.

Whether that simply means parking a little further from the doors at Target or eating just one piece of chocolate instead of three (because, if history tells us anything, I'm sure as heck not about to give it up), I can't wait to look back a year from now and see just how far those baby steps have taken me.

Maybe, just maybe, they'll make up for all those miles I never ran.

NICOLE WIEGAND

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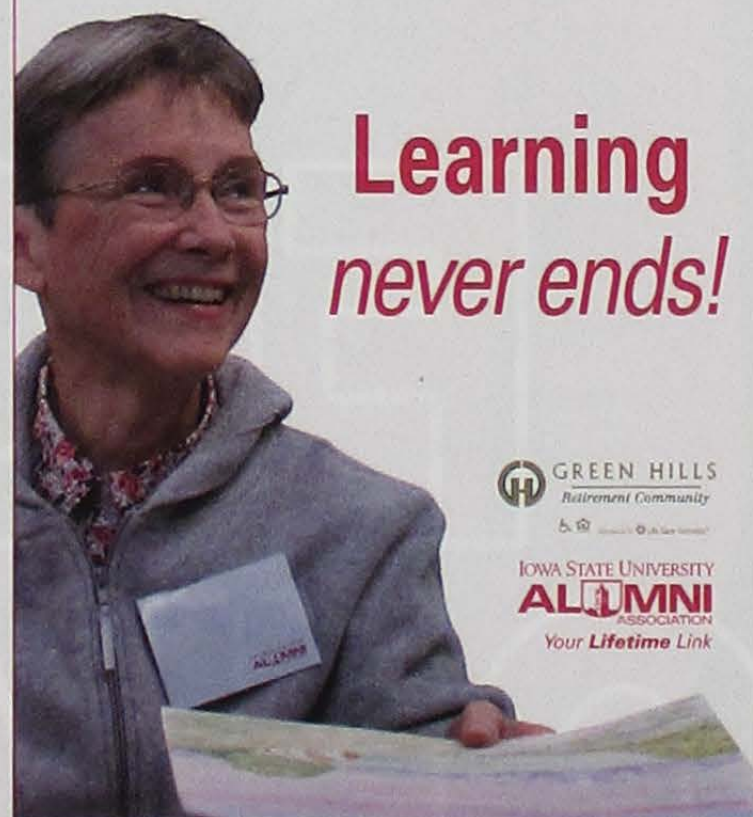
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TWO FIGHTING CHANCES

In the darkest days of a seven-year fight against a debilitating kidney disease, an Ames woman prayed to God to take her if that's what He had in mind. When a stranger stepped forward, it was as if two prayers had crossed in the night.

BY BETH DALBEY

Don't misunderstand. Death wasn't welcome at the tidy Ames ranch house where Helen and Don Drake raised two sons and stored a lifetime of memories.

But, in those short days in 2010 and 2011, when Helen did little but sleep and eat bland food while an at-home kidney dialysis contraption did everything her own organs were supposed to do and what they would do if her prayers were answered with a cadaver kidney she accepted that God might have another plan.

Another live kidney was too much to pray for. After all, she had received her big gift in 2003, when Don answered the doctor's diagnosis that Helen had polycystic kidney disease (PKD) by offering his wife one of his own.

If he died on the operating table — the risk of death is minimal, about 0.06 percent, the National Kidney Foundation says — then Helen could have both of his, Don said.

Don's the first to admit his motives were selfish and altruistic at the same time.

"I was thinking, 'I would really like to help my wife survive additional years without having to resort to dialysis,'" he said. "We were young, 53 and 54. We had a lot of years, and I didn't want to live those years without my wife."

Then, about five years after receiving her husband's kidney, she began rejecting it after contracting cytomegalovirus (CMV).

CMV is a relatively common infection the Centers for Disease Control say affects up to 80 percent of the U.S. population by the time they are 40. It's no big deal for a healthy person, similar to a mild case of the flu, but for a person with PKD, it can mean death.

After she received her husband's kidney, doctors warned her, "Don't ever get CMV; you don't want to get this because it can kill you," Helen said.

When she was hospitalized after getting ill over the July 4 holiday in 2008, the virus had attacked every organ. The big, strong kidney her husband had given her five years

before was now useless and impotent, shriveled to the size of a grape.

By October, it had failed completely, and "there was a real possibility I would not survive," Helen said.

Months of dialysis, which took up big chunks of time three days a week, followed.

She waited, getting sicker and weaker, praying for some movement on the transplant list.

She was paper-thin and weighed only 83 pounds when she got approval for the at-home peritoneal dialysis machine that would at least make the ritual more convenient.

That type of dialysis uses the lining — called the peritoneal membrane — of the patient's abdomen to filter the blood, acting as an artificial kidney. Every single second of every single day revolved around measuring urine output, examining it for early signs of peritonitis and the never-ending fluid exchanges that kept her alive.

Don left his job at the Department of Transportation — he's since retired — every day around noon to make sure Helen got out of bed and had something to eat. Helen was sliding downhill quickly, and he knew she needed nourishment, even if she did throw it up later.

"I had no energy," she said. "As soon as he would leave, I'd go back to bed. Maybe I was sheltering him from the truth about how horrible I felt."

Those years with Don's kidney had been a gift. Maybe that act of pure love by her husband — "He had already given me his heart," she said, "but this was a part of him that was more than that, this was a gift of life" — was her miracle.

Of the some 88,000 people on the transplant waiting list at any given time, many were younger people with more experiences and years ahead of them. She was 58 then, and they deserved a chance to reach that age, too, she told herself.

"I honestly began to think the whole thing would be so much easier if I would die rather than have to live like this, and I didn't want to be a burden," Helen said.

Sometime between the first transplant and that moment, her fear of death had evaporated. Always a woman of faith, the second chance her husband's kidney gave her had strengthened her "trust in the Lord," she said.

"He knows what's right," she said. "I think my faith prepared me for whatever happens in my life, and if I were to die tomorrow, I am ready."

"I did not want to die, but I was not afraid."

Thy will be done, she prayed.

• • •

Neither Helen nor Rod Simpson is willing to say for sure their prayers didn't miraculously cross one night and become the plan that would save not only Helen's life, but also the life of another woman neither had ever heard of before.

But they don't dismiss the notion, either.

Rod, now 61, can't pinpoint exactly what led him to the bearded 31-year-old with a mop of dirty blond hair. They seemingly had little in common but a workplace — the Memorial Union at Iowa State University — but the younger man seemed burdened in some way, and Rod reached out.

"I felt there was a need there," he said.

Brian Drake, Helen and Don's youngest son, was indeed in a funk. By then it was 2010, and as Rod and Brian's friendship — a mentorship in many respects — developed, Brian grew increasingly anxious about his mother's grave prognosis.

"He told me she had polycystic kidney disease and her first transplant had lasted seven years, then failed, and if she didn't get a transplant, there wasn't a lot of hope," Rod said. "Something about that tripped a trigger with me."

Would Helen accept a kidney from a complete stranger, Rod asked over a pool game at his home one night about six months after the two had met.

"I asked how his mom was doing, how

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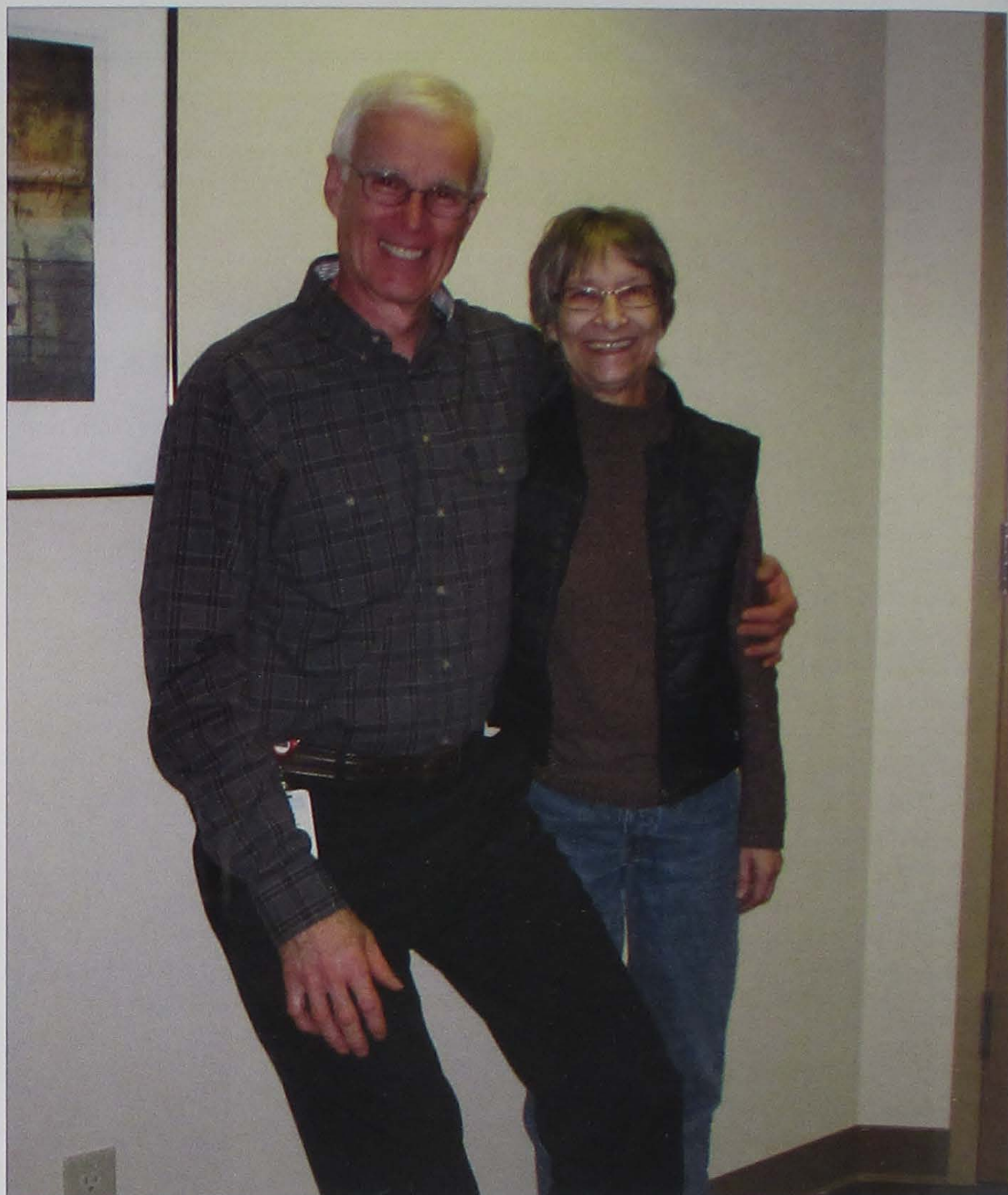
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Helen Drake, right, received a kidney from Marvin Harger, left, in May 2011. The four people involved in the paired donor kidney transplant gathered several weeks after the procedures for a news conference at Iowa Methodist Medical Center, where the procedures occurred. PHOTO COURTESY OF UNITYPOINT HEALTH-DES MOINES

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long she could go on with peritoneal dialysis," Rod said, recalling Brian's stunned reaction. "I think he was shocked that I would just offer that out of the blue.

"Brian asked, 'Are you kidding?' I said, 'No, I'm serious. Would you ask her?' 'Absolutely,' he said."

The offer didn't materialize completely out of thin air, of course.

Rod had been battling with his conscious. He had called himself an organ donor for years — on paper and on the back of his driver's license, that is — but had begun to question the integrity in that statement.

"Are you really an organ donor if you're gambling that you would never have to give one?" he asked himself. "Was I really going to consider myself an organ donor if I didn't give an organ while I was alive?"

Neither Brian nor Josh, the Drakes' oldest son, was a suitable donor. Having already rejected one kidney and in perilous health, Helen needed a live humanitarian donor to step forward rather than wait for her number to come up on the waiting list. If not him, then whom? If not now, then when?

Rod turned to prayer, always a guide in his life. He talked to his wife, explaining the strength of his conviction that donating a kidney to Helen was something he had been called to do.

"You know, it can kill ya," he recalled Bev Simpson saying, testing his commitment.

"Yeah, I know," he said at the time. "It's just something I feel strongly about."

His three children gave him the green light.

He was healthy — healthier than he had

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

been in years.

"I have never been able to lose weight, but for some reason, just before Brian and I met, I had lost 50 pounds," Rod said. "I felt so good, I was going to the gym, I was healthy and feeling good. The doctors said, 'You are in such good shape, now is the perfect time.'"

The signs were there.

"After a lot of thought and a lot of prayer, I had a very, very strong feeling that this was the right thing to do," Rod said. "It was divine intervention maybe. I was praying for the whole family — for Brian, for Josh, and for Helen and Don, because it affected the whole family. That was my answer. I had no reason not to do it."

So Rod posed a life-changing question that, when repeated by her son, could have knocked an increasingly frail Helen Drake over with a feather.

"Oh, definitely, I will accept your offer," she told Rod the next day.

"I hadn't even been praying for that. It was a total shock. I didn't think that was something that was even possible," Helen said. "Rod is such a fine individual. He really just wanted to make a difference. What a difference! He was saving my life."

"It's like when someone runs into a burning building to save someone, they are willing to take a huge risk. This was risky. It was a great act of love."

A flurry of appointments and tests at the Transplant Center at Iowa Methodist Medical Center followed. The surgery was set. Then, at the eleventh hour, the bubble burst.

Heartbroken, Helen gave her fate over to God again.

• • •

She had gotten a call from the Transplant Center. One last test had found antibodies in her blood that ruled out Rod as a donor. The surgery was off.

"It was kind of like a death in the family," Rod said. "They had just put the kibosh on everything we were trying to do."

While researching humanitarian kidney donation, Rod had become aware of the paired donor program, and he thought Helen might benefit from it. The Paired Donor Alliance says that of more than 88,000 Americans waiting for a kidney transplant, about a dozen die each day because there are not enough donors.

The paired donor program matches

one incompatible donor/recipient pair to another pair in the same situation.

He called the Transplant Center the next day and pressed: Couldn't he give his kidney to someone else, freeing up a kidney for Helen?

As it turned out, the hospital already had a candidate in mind — Marvin Harger, a 60-year-old Urbandale man who had walked into the transplant center a few days before and offered a kidney to anyone who needed it.

Inspired by the film "Seven Pounds," in which a man leaves organs to people in a quest for redemption, Marvin also had felt called by his Christian faith to become a humanitarian donor.

Tests were run, and Marvin's kidney wasn't just a good match for Helen, it was better than Rod's had been. And Rod's kidney could go to Victoria Mena-Amaya, a native of El Salvador who also lives in Urbandale.

• • •

One time strangers, the four are inextricably linked now.

The four operations occurring simultaneously on that day in May 2011 were so incident-free that the backup surgery team, ready to respond to an emergency in a nanosecond, reportedly played cards during the procedures.

That it all went so smoothly — more smoothly than the doctors involved had ever seen, Rod said — is another testament to it being the right thing to do, he said.

"It's kind of funny," he said. "As we were going through this and all of the tests, the doctors over and over telling you, 'This could kill you; this is a serious thing.' But all of us who went through the surgery had a sense of peace throughout the whole process. The underlying current is that none of us was afraid to go through it. It was so destined to be that everything went well."

They get together four times a year in easy, familial camaraderie. Helen and Victoria talk about how blessed they are, and Rod and Marvin correct them and say they're the lucky ones.

No one is the same.

"I have another family now — Victoria, her daughter and family, Marvin and Doty, Rob and Bev," Helen said. "They are more than just friends."

For his part, Rod says there's a grace about his life that — complete and as

filled with love as it was — wasn't there before and that he hadn't known was lacking.

It's not just seeing Helen and Victoria again leading healthy, vibrant lives. It's knowing that something inside of him subtly changed when he offered himself as a vessel in a larger scheme that saved their lives, moved two people up for transplants and shifted thousands more up a line on the waiting list.

Devoutly Christian, it's hard for him to know how to talk about what he did without appearing boastful. He doesn't want to be regarded as a hero. But he does want others to feel what he's feeling now.

"I have never thought of myself as having saved someone's life, but the future that Helen and Victoria had was such that it was in limbo for them, and by being able to do this transplant, we did save two lives," he said.

"When you stop to think about it, even though you try to play it down and don't want to boast or tout what you've done, it's a really good feeling. I felt led to do it, and I'd be lying if I said I'm not proud of myself for doing it, because it was definitely the right thing to do."

"It's simple," he said, pausing. "Why don't other people do it?"

He hopes his experience gives someone else the nudge to become an organ donor. A recipient has almost 20 percent to 30 percent more life expectancy with a live kidney than with a cadaver kidney, and for women like Helen and Victoria, it can mean the difference between seeing their grandchildren graduate or not.

"I would like to see more people understand it's not that big of a deal," Rod said.

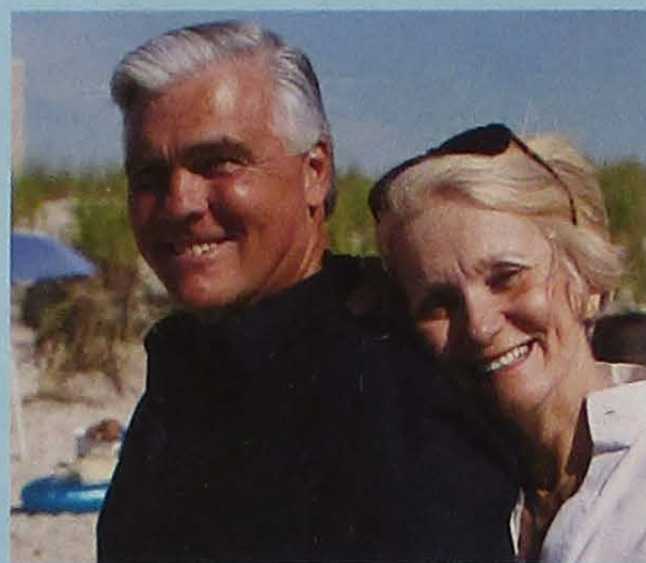
"You're not going to die. If you have your health together, you are able to do something like this, and there are so many people who need it. Blessings work both ways, and we are all blessed by it."

Free now of the demanding peritoneal dialysis machine that harnessed Helen to their home, the Drakes are picking up their life where it left off when her kidney began failing five years ago. They've been SCUBA diving, spent almost a month in Hawaii, and have weekend adventures with their five grandchildren.

"I owe so much to Don, Rod and Marvin," Helen said. "I can never repay that. It's a gift of life."

And it's one lived now with "overwhelming gratitude," she said. ♦

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COMMUNITY



Stella Chapman, of Huxley, and her dog, Captain, bring cheer and distraction to children undergoing cancer treatments at Blank Children's Hospital in Des Moines. The pair have been visiting children on and off for the past seven years. PHOTO BY WHITNEY SAGER

CAPTAIN'S QUEST

Stella Chapman and therapy dog Captain have just one mission in mind: Put a smile on kids' faces

BY WHITNEY SAGER

Sometimes a four-legged friend is all children need to cheer them up and distract them from what they are going through.

Stella Chapman, of Huxley, and her 9-year-old Weimaraner, Captain, have been visiting children at

Blank Children's Hospital in Des Moines off and on for the past seven years.

These visits came about as the result of her son's time spent in the hospital undergoing treatments for cancer. He noticed there were not many dogs that came to visit patients and thought it would be a good idea to have Captain become

a therapy dog.

Before this could happen, Captain had to undergo extensive training. He passed his first citizenship class when he was nine months old — an accomplishment Stella said is unusual for his breed.

He is hand-signal-trained

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Crazy about WINTER CAMPING

BY TODD BURRAS

Jim Colbert jokes that his membership in the “winter campers society” is current — he camped in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area (Big Winter Camping Area, he calls it.) this past February — but all kidding aside, the Ames resident is serious about winter camping.

Colbert, an associate professor in the Department of Ecology, Evolution and Organismal Biology at Iowa State University, had his first winter camping experience in December 1971.

“We, two friends and I, camped in a wooded area along the Cedar River downstream of Cedar Rapids,” Colbert said.

“Why? Well, we were 15 and were planning careers as ‘beaver trappers of the Old West.’ We thought cold weather camping was probably an essential skill to develop. Later we learned that wasn’t really a career option. ... In addition, through years of hiking around in the summer woods of eastern

Iowa, I had come to despise mosquitoes and stinging nettles. Winter seemed much more pleasant.”

After ruling out a career as a beaver trapper, Colbert broadened his career interests and also expanded his winter camping experience. At times, the two have intersected.

“I’ve led 13 groups of ISU students on field trips to the BWCA,” Colbert said. “The first three of these trips were in the winter. My goal was to provide a challenging experience where students could learn both about the biological diversity of southern boreal forest and about successful travel in wilderness areas. For the last 10 years a colleague and I have taken students on canoe-based trips (in mid-May) with the same goals. All the students have lived.”

Besides northeastern Minnesota (home of the BWCA, where he’s taken 20 winter camping trips) and Iowa, Colbert has also

spent time winter camping in Wisconsin (Chequamegon National Forest), Michigan (Porcupine Mountains), Colorado (Neota Flat-tops Wilderness) and Ontario (Quetico Provincial Park).

As Iowans settle in for another long winter, Colbert reflects on some of his cold weather camping experiences and offers some advice and recommendations for those intrepid souls who might just be tempted to spend a night or two outdoors with Old Man Winter.

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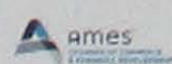


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EXPLORE



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

What's the coldest night you've spent outdoors winter camping, and where were you?

Minus-45 degrees Fahrenheit, and I don't mean "wind chill," I mean actual ambient air temperature. It was quite brisk waking up in the morning. We were in Quetico Provincial Park.

Besides staying warm, what's the greatest challenge to winter camping?

Staying cool. There's a lot of hard work involved in winter camping — breaking trail through deep snow, hauling sleds up steep hills, digging snow pits, sawing firewood, etc. It's really easy to get overheated and get your clothes all sweaty. Then, when you stop working, you get really cold.

What's the most unusual experience you've had winter camping?

Hmmm ... there've been so many. Did you know that at 40-below snow behaves

more like sand when you're trying to pull a sled over it? It's not really slippery. I fell through the ice on a river once — up to my neck with my skis on — and managed to get out by myself. I was standing in the middle of Lac La Croix (Minn.) once in a mid-March wet snow blizzard, soaked to the skin and unable to see anything but white in any direction, and then a pack of wolves started howling. It was so awesome. We stood there longer just listening and freezing. I crossed Seagull Lake (Minn.) in the dark during a ground blizzard, and we kept our orientation by following a star we could see. I slid a pan of glowing charcoal under the oil pan of my car once so we could warm it up enough to start it. We had a pine marten in our camp one time that eventually stole one of my favorite bacon grease-soaked leather gloves.

Lost any fingers or toes to the cold?

Nope. Still have them all. I've frost-nipped most of my fingers at one time or

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

Twenty words of advice from 42 years of winter camping (less than 0.48 words per year):

- No whining
- Expect discomfort
- Trim toenails
- Lube up
- No cotton
- Hydrate often
- Dress chilly
- Laminates are best
- Be patient
- Stay positive

Source: Jim Colbert

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

another. Froze my thumb to the pump on a Coleman stove once. Frostbit a toe bad enough that it turned black. Lost some skin, but not the toe. Fingers and toes are hard to keep warm. Best advice for cold fingers is take off your gloves or mittens and put them inside your parka to keep them warm and then hold your fingers against your bare belly until they warm up.

What are the keys to having a really good winter camping experience?

First, you have to really want to be winter camping, and you have to be with people who really want to be winter camping. Positive attitude is essential. Second, you'll be a lot happier moving your gear on sled than with a backpack. Third, if you have a regular nylon tent, not a heated canvas tent, and your campsite has a view, you need a different campsite. Staying out of the wind really helps. Fourth, take frequent, short breaks when you're traveling. Whenever possible, take breaks in a location that is "in the sun and out of the wind." Microclimate really matters. Finally, I recommend the "Twenty Words of Advice" (see sidebar). Most are obvious, but a couple require a little explanation. "Lube up" refers both to some lubrication in the inner thigh area to avoid chafing and to keeping your

lips lubed with Blistik, etc. "Dress chilly" means that if you're warm before you start skiing/snowshoeing/pulling a sled, then you're overdressed and will quickly overheat.

What are the absolute can't-forget items you must have with you when you go winter camping?

Matches (in several places). A headlamp with extra batteries. Liner gloves. A good sleeping bag and pad. More than one saw. Did I mention matches? There are actually many different items that, if you forgot them, would significantly increase your degree of misery. Check your gear carefully. Check again. Build in some redundancy.

I think I heard you've done some winter camping in your back yard. Does your wife think you're crazy?

My wife has always thought I'm crazy, but not because I've winter camped in the back yard, which I actually haven't done. I do, however, sometimes set up my woodstove-heated winter camping tent in my back yard and use it as a "man cave." In fact, my winter camping tent is currently up in my back yard.

When you boil it down, what's the allure of winter camping for you?

No bugs. No bears. No crowds. And it's stunningly beautiful. ❖

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*But, one thing
never changes*

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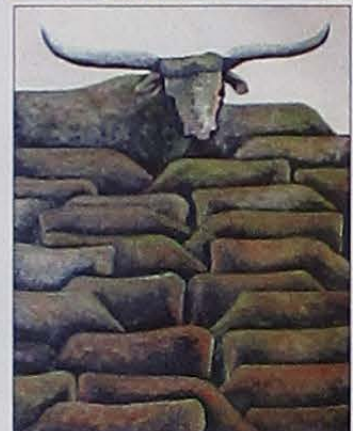
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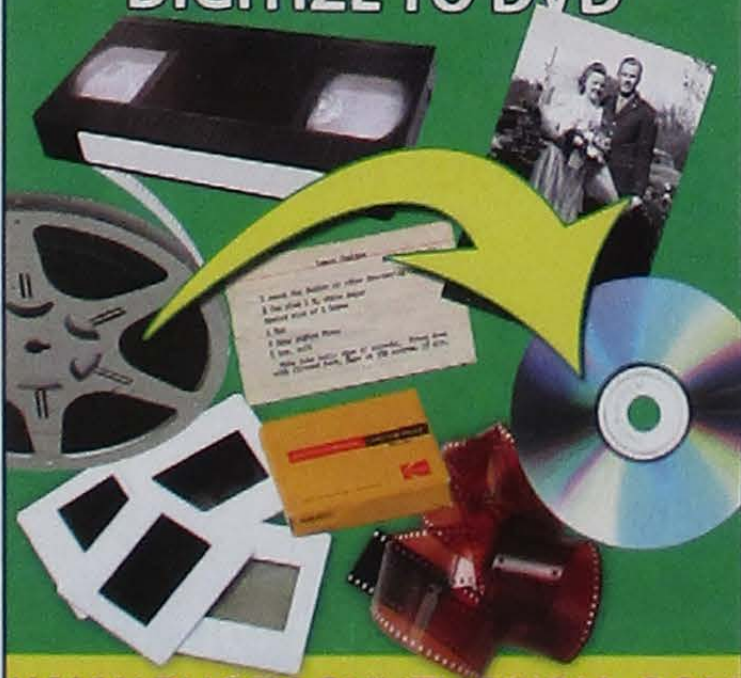
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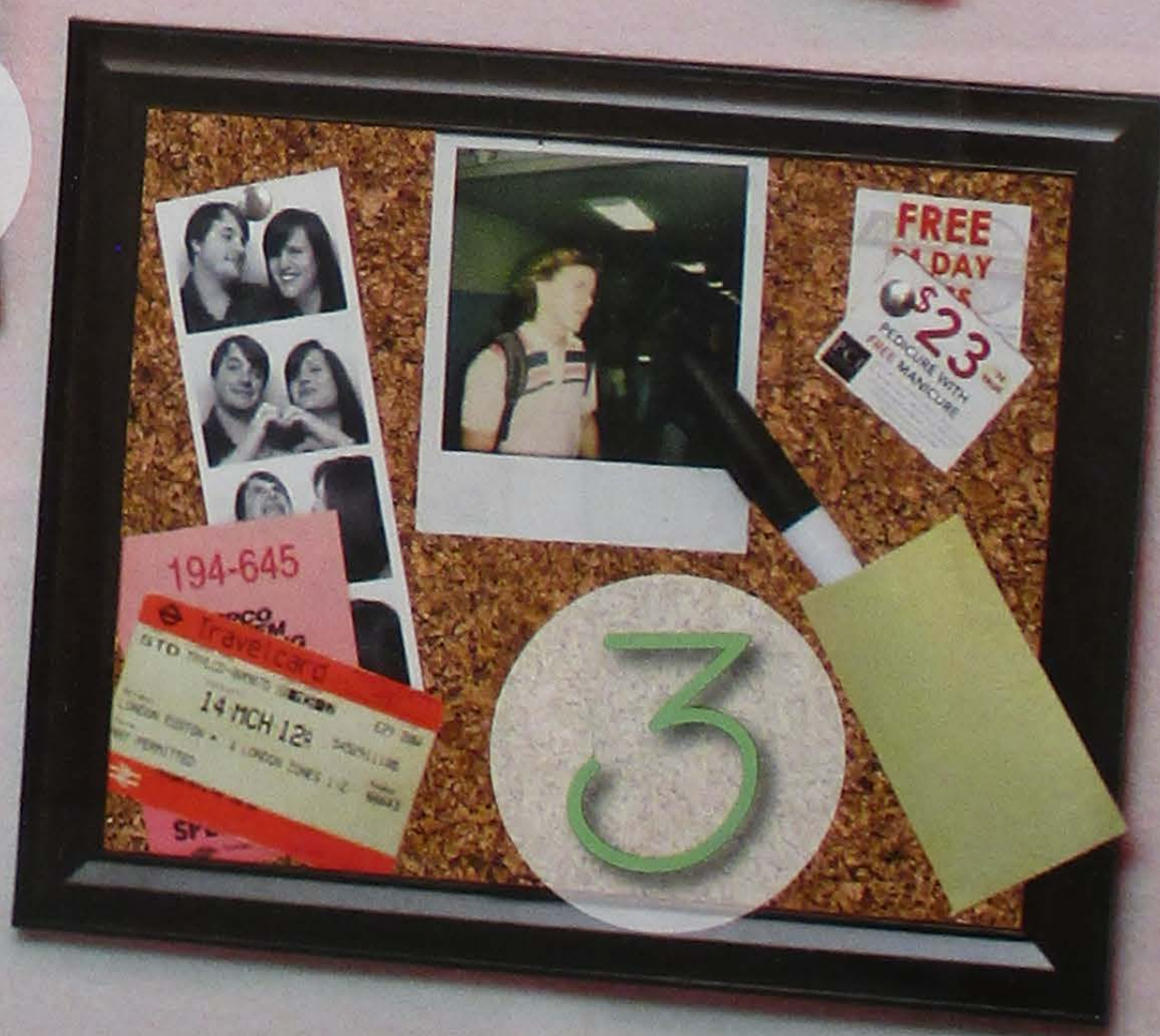
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Start the new year off on the right foot by using just a few items from the craft or dollar store to organize everything from doctor's appointments to dinner menus!

Frame a piece of scrapbook paper for an easy, stylish dry-erase board (1). Transform a frame into a calendar (or anything you want!) with a quick coat of chalkboard paint (2). Or, frame a sheet of corkboard for a place to store photos, mementos and reminders (3). Arrange near an entryway for foolproof planning! ♦

Refresh

Nothing tastes more refreshing and healthy than a big glass of ice water. Maybe you're planning on taking better care of your body in the new year, or getting back into shape. Maybe you're looking to give up soda or drink less coffee. Either way, water's the way to go — but who says it needs to be boring? Toss these combinations into a glass of ice-cold H₂O for a tasty, all-natural thirst quencheing 'agua fresca' you can feel good about.

- ❖ HONEY
- ❖ LEMON
- ❖ MINT

- ❖ ORANGE
- ❖ BERRIES
- ❖ MANGO

- ❖ LIME
- ❖ CUCUMBER
- ❖ MINT



Relax

While these fudgy treats are, in fact, brownies, a secret ingredient makes them a smart (yet indulgent) treat that you don't have to feel guilty about. Top with a swirl of honey and a dollop or two of vanilla Greek yogurt for a healthy, sweet treat.

BLACK BEAN BROWNIES

- One 15-ounce can black beans, drained and rinsed very well
- 3 large eggs
- 3 tablespoons canola oil
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- Pinch salt
- 1/4 cup mini semi-sweet chocolate chips

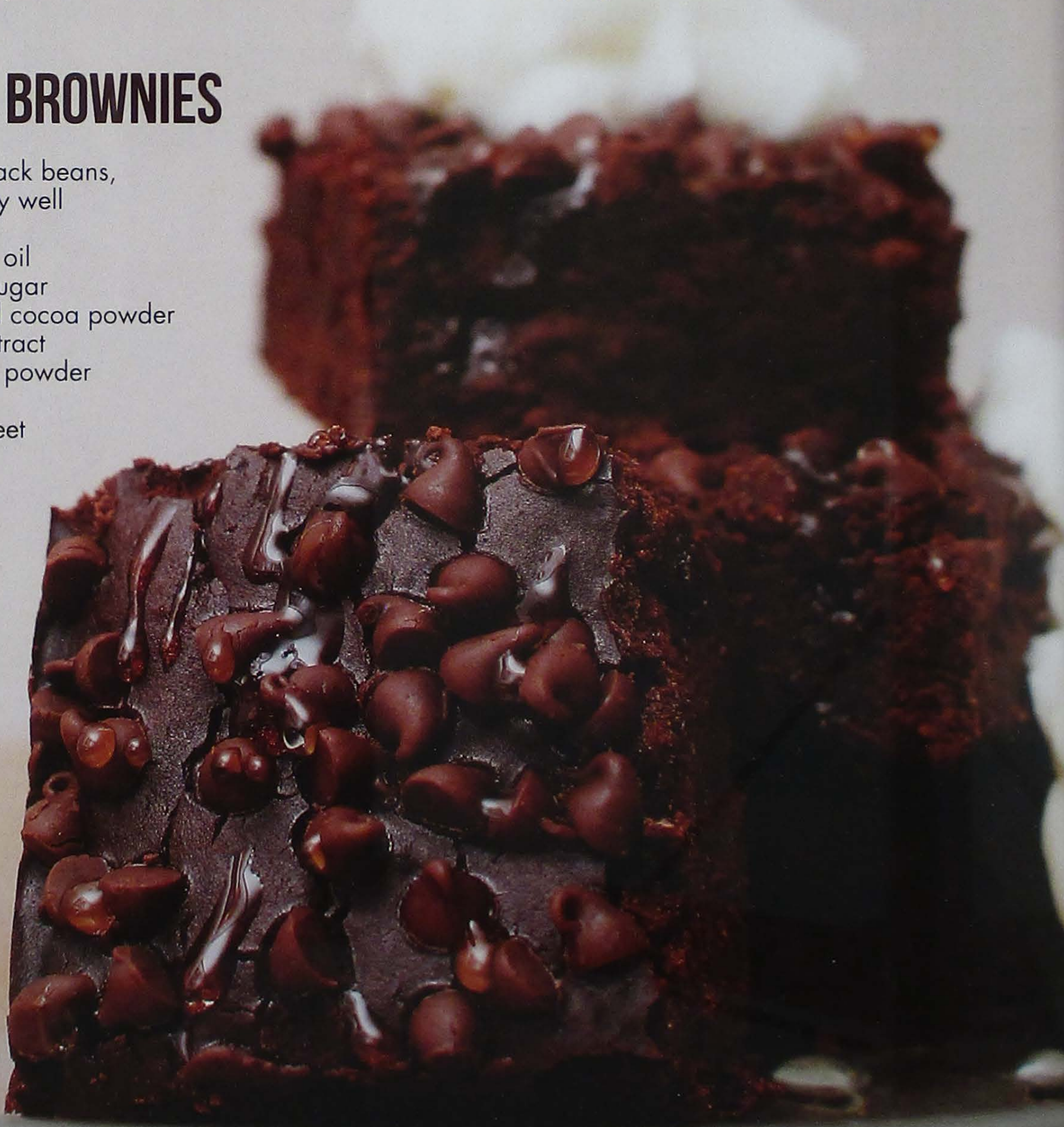
Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Puree beans in food processor until smooth.

Add remaining ingredients and pulse until smooth. Pour batter into a greased 8x8 pan and top with additional chocolate chips, if desired.

Bake for 30-35 minutes, or until toothpick inserted into center comes out clean.

Allow brownies to cool, and try not to eat the whole batch!

Makes 16 servings.



EVERGREEN EFFECT

It might be cold and snowy outside, but it's the perfect time for evergreens to thrive

BY JAN RIGGENBACH

If we could count on a winter-long snow cover, I wouldn't care whether the plants beneath had bright-colored foliage or had been reduced to nothing more than a pile of dead leaves.

But an Iowa winter is always a wild-card, and brown is not my favorite garden color. I treasure any perennials that retain their good looks all winter, peeking from the melting snow with a reassuring hint of the spring to come.

Fortunately, many hardy ground-cover plants that thrive in Iowa are evergreen, including Japanese pachysandra, creeping myrtle (*Vinca minor*), ajuga, European ginger, creeping thyme, and creeping lily-turf (*Liriope spicata*).

While some creeping sedums lose their leaves in winter, others are evergreen or at least semi-evergreen. The foliage of Murale and Dragon's Blood sedums, for example, turns russet or red. But it's

Angelina sedum I count on for the most spectacular winter color of all. Cold weather turns the chartreuse, needle-like foliage to a vibrant reddish orange you can see from a block away.

Firewitch and other cheddar pinks (*Dianthus gratianopolitanus*) retain their grass-like, silvery-blue foliage all winter. Pussytoes remains as an attractive mat of silvery foliage. Both thrive in dry soil and full sun.

In shady beds, foamflower foliage is even more colorful in winter than in summer. Many varieties of coralbells and foamy bells, both foamflower relatives, also hold their attractive foliage color well into winter.

When the weather turns cold, bergenia's thick, leathery leaves change from shiny green to deep purple.

Christmas fern, with its lustrous evergreen leaves, is a particular favorite. It's slow to grow but worth the wait to add winter interest to shady beds. Leatherleaf

fern also holds up well in winter.

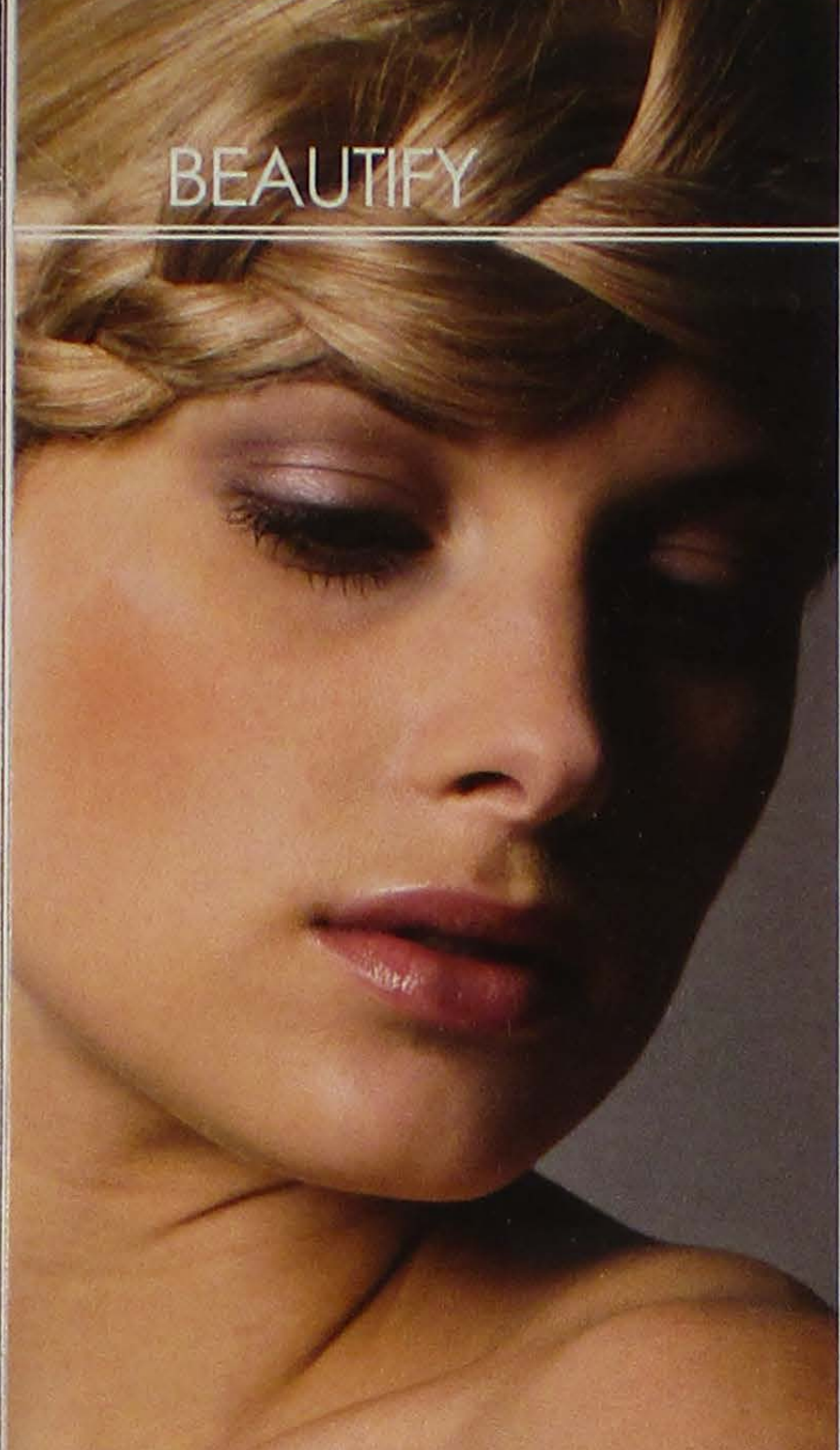
If you planted early bulbs such as snow crocus and winter aconite, you'll be rewarded by bright flowers in February or March. I planted mine along the sidewalk, where I'll be sure to see this early glimpse of spring.

When snow blankets the garden, all of these plants are too short to add winter interest. That's why gardens also need dwarf conifers, tall ornamental grasses, trees with peeling bark, and shrubs with colorful berries.

With so many possibilities, why are most winter landscapes in the Midwest still so drab? I'm convinced it's because we gardeners do most of our planting in the spring, when winter is the last thing on our minds. But there's a cure. Visit public gardens this winter and make notes of good-looking plants to buy this spring. ❖

Longtime garden columnist Jan Rigenbach lives in Omaha.

BEAUTIFY



Braids, Brights & Blow-Dry Bars

While we are in the depths of winter here in Iowa, there are beautiful, warm, sunny places to escape to for rest and relaxation. Your salon professional can help you get ready for those warmer spots in a number of ways.

Brighten up your hair color. Try a new haircut. Get a facial to clear away any dead skin and make you look younger. Try the brighter colors on your hands and feet with a manicure and pedicure.

Clean up those legs, underarms and bikini lines with a fresh wax. Get a massage to start the relaxation process. Why not do this at home before you go?

Be ready for the escape by doing all your preparation before the trip. And save money, too. It is always less costly to do this at home before you travel to a resort.

It's often less busy in Ames salons with the students gone, and you may find special

prices on services to fill these times.

Save money on needed products by hitting the salon at home after the holidays. They will be having closeouts on holiday specials and want to move whatever is left. Sales like this are less likely at resorts, because this will be the height of their holiday season.

Many salons also have those cute small sizes for travel at this time of year to make packing easier. Look for a small flat iron and blow dryer.

Go away for a real rest, not just a trip crammed full of beauty treatments you could have at home. I find it stressful to get salon services away because I never know what I'm going to get. A massage in a tiny room at a huge luxurious hotel was not what I expected.

And when you get home, be prepared for a brand new year of great salon services and products.

Blow-dry bars are taking the salon world by storm. Stylists are getting ready to see you more than once a week for quick styling

services. They can teach you how to create the look at home and what products to use, but there are always times when we just need a professional to make us look and feel better.

If you have an evening event coming up and want a special look, updos and braids have taken on new looks and can make you gorgeous for that event. Consider having them do your makeup too.

After all, if the prom girls can treat themselves, so can you.

Messy hair is OUT. Beautiful hair in all lengths and finished but not structured styles are IN.

Don't be stuck in your high school, college or first career look. That just shouts "I quit caring" to the world.

Bravely ask for the change you deserve and look great for the new year 2014. ♦



MARY CLARE
LOKKEN

Mary Clare Lokken is the owner of PCI Academy in Ames. She writes this column after consulting with educators there. Reach her via email at mclokken@gmail.com.

Choosing FITNESS SOLUTIONS

It's that time of year ... when the diet industry falls in love... every song you hear seems to say ... hello extra five pounds, how did you get there? Every fitness ad emphasizes your need for New Year resolutions and diet book sales are on the rise. And this song of mine wishes you the same thing, too.



DEBRA
ATKINSON

Well, not so fast. This song of mine aims to clarify your choices of programs and professionals and provide insight on what's "out there" in hope you'll be able to make an informed decision if you're shopping for support this year. This is an excerpt from "Navigating

Fitness After 50: Your GPS for Choosing Programs and Professionals You Can Trust."

People, certified and not, go into fitness because they want to help others share the joy exercise has brought them. I don't suggest anyone is intentionally causing harm, just that they simply don't recognize the nuances between exercising and exercising optimally. Sometimes the small details aren't as important. Children, for instance, are resilient, and they self-correct. They need less instruction. They primarily need exposure to the right activities and a positive environment.

If you have osteoporosis, however, following exercise guidelines for an apparently healthy population without modifications could be an injury waiting to happen or at the least a waste of your exer-

cise time without results.

If you have osteoarthritis (or other joint challenges) there are exercises you should be doing, and there are those you should avoid. The form and alignment during those exercises, the range of motion and where to start and how to progress are all integrated thoughts a trained fitness professional will have planned for you.

Without proper education, those don't come together.

Let's clarify here and now that terms are confusing for consumers. Certified doesn't mean good. Not certified doesn't mean bad. I do happen to be a believer in at minimum a formal education and one national certification that serves as evidence that a professional knows a certain body of information related to performing the job. In fewer and fewer

certifications is there an evaluation of practical skills that a fitness professional will need day to day. You are at the mercy of the owners and managers who hire and train fitness staff. It's a buyer-beware industry right now. There still is no required credential for fitness professionals. Please read that sentence again. Anyone can call themselves a personal trainer, fitness instructor or open a fitness center.

There are three components that determine your trainer's competency: education, certification and experience.

Education teaches foundational knowledge and measures the retention of it. Many fields would require it as a prerequisite to a professional credential.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

Certification establishes that a person is minimally competent to operate unsupervised in their field. It does not indicate expertise in the field.

Experience is from on-the-job practical skills gained from either working with clients, observing other skilled professionals, or taking continuing education courses to update current knowledge and learn new skills.

Education and certifications being equal, most clients will choose based on what their friends recommend, whom they like, and whether a trainer's experience is relevant to their goals. Old is the new young among fitness professionals. Just be sure you don't equate life experience with fitness experience and knowledge.

As someone who promotes fitness, it seems ironic for me to criticize any exercise program. Truthfully, to any program that gets someone off the couch and exercising I have to tip my hat. That doesn't mean I agree with the philosophy within all programs. There are many I don't agree with but that are successful at motivating movement where other programs have failed.

"Passionate" is a word fitness instructors and trainers overuse to describe how they feel about fitness. They are also passionate about their opinions: This author is no exception. If they get excited about a program, a prop or tool, a way of doing it that has worked for them, you can bet they will be promoting it hard. Sometimes blindly passionate about a new trend, a trainer puts that before their

client's best interest.

Since no two bodies are alike, a one-size-fits-all approach to exercise and training can more easily lead to injury or a poor experience. If you have imbalances and enter a group training program, it isn't likely that those imbalances will be found when you're one of 10 or 40 people in class.

The cost of group training to you the consumer is low, and the return for a large group for a training business is high. The question is, however, what is the cost of a program that has a higher risk of injury? You will have to make your own decisions about it or find some trusted advisor to help you with your decision.

There are often Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) posted on fitness business websites. Here are your "should ask"

questions. You should be very comfortable with the combined responses from these questions that the trainer or program you're considering meets your needs:

Are you certified as a personal trainer and by whom? Is that certification current? Do you have a degree in exercise science? How much experience do you have? Have you worked with someone with my needs before? Have you worked with someone my age before? Do you have two or three references I may contact? Which professional organizations do you belong to and/or are you listed in? ❖

Debra Atkinson, MS, CSCS is a 28-year fitness industry expert and prior Senior Lecturer in the Department of Kinesiology at Iowa State University and prior Personal Training Director at Ames Racquet & Fitness Center. She is founder of Voice For Fitness. She can be reached at www.voiceforfitness.com

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Steps for

Winning weight loss

By now, you've probably made a New Year's resolution to lose weight or to eat better.

You are not alone. Two of the most popular New Year's resolutions are to get in shape and to lose weight. Losing weight and getting in shape may seem like a lot of work, but these easy steps will help keep you on course:



NICOLE
ARNOLD

- Set realistic goals. Smaller weight loss goals are often more achievable than a large unrealistic goal. People who lose weight successfully and long-term lose one to two pounds per week.

- Feel full on fewer calories. Fruits and vegetables fill you up, and they are low in calories, fat-free and provide fiber, vitamins and minerals. Fit five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables into your daily diet. This leaves less room for cookies, snack

cakes and candy.

- Eat breakfast. Eating breakfast means more energy, better nutrition and reaching a healthy weight. Breakfast eaters eat fewer calories at lunch and dinner. Try these powerful breakfast ideas: a bowl of oatmeal, fruit and yogurt, a whole grain English muffin and skim milk, or toast and peanut butter.

- Dear Diary: Keep a food diary as part of your weight loss strategy. Journaling is one of the indicators of people who are successful in losing weight and maintaining it. Write down everything you eat and drink. This helps identify areas that need improvement. Maybe you munch late at night, drink too many regular sodas or overeat at lunch.

- Don't miss meals. Going too long between meals inevitably means overeating. People who skip meals are more likely to overeat later in the day. Refuel every four hours.

- Think about what you drink. Cutting back on soda can save you a lot of calories.

Instead, drink lots of water or switch from regular soda to diet soda. Water helps boost your metabolism and hydrates the body. Strive to drink 10 eight-ounce glasses per day.

- Get active. All exercise burns calories, so get moving. Do some form of activity every day, walk the dog, walk at the mall, take the stairs or do yoga. The key is to do something!

- Ditch miracle products. If something promises results that sound too good to be true, they probably are. Skip pills or products that claim you'll lose weight fast or without any effort. Leading an active life and eating right is the most effective way to lose weight and keep it off. ♦

Hy-Vee dietitian Nicole Arnold, RD, LD, received her bachelor of science degree in dietetics from Michigan State University. Her dietetic internship was completed at the University of Michigan hospital in Ann Arbor. This information is not intended to be medical advice.

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PROVIDE

A NEW YEAR, A NEW PLAN

It's that time again: time to review the past year and think about the future. I make a list of things that were really good for me in 2013. And then I make another list of things that I did in 2013 that I don't want to repeat.

So, rather than a resolution, I make a "this year I will change this habit" plan. I have a tough time making permanent changes to my habits. I remember reading that it takes 21 days to change a habit. I always thought adding a pleasant habit, like having dessert every day, could be accomplished in 21 days. But not so easy with a habit that takes work and requires discipline.



KAREN
PETERSEN

THE 60-DAY PLAN

This summer I learned that it really takes at least two months, two months of consistent effort day after day, to change a behavior or habit. As we know, but sometimes forget, changing a habit requires an intense commitment. Here is the 60-day plan method.

1. Choose one and only one habit to focus on for 60 days. You may actually make other changes because of this one goal, but focus on only one goal
2. Engage another person to report to; this will be your accountability coach.
3. Identify the method you will use for the next sixty days.
4. Find a way to be obligated to make the change.

Of course the first step is to identify the change you would like to make. Some of the financial changes people tell me they would like to make are: save more

for retirement, spend less, save more, quit carrying a balance on credit cards, save for a vacation to Disney World and retire early. I am sure you can see the problem with these changes. There is no plan or method to know if you are successful.

THE 60-DAY PLAN TO RETIRE AT AGE 65

1. Meet with your financial advisor to determine how much more you should be saving to retire at age 65. Your advisor says you must save an additional \$400 a month. This makes the goal measurable.

2. Tell your advisor or a friend (this is your accountability coach) that you will save an additional \$400 a month in your retirement account to measure your success.

3. Increase your retirement contribution by \$400 to begin as soon as possible.

Talk with your accountability coach weekly about your strategies and struggle to live on less money each month. Now you are obligated to make the change.

At the end of 60 days you will be comfortable with your new habit, you may even notice other positive financial changes as a result of your 60 day commitment. If you have financial changes you would like to make, this is a good time to begin your own 60-day plan, because life is...more than money. ♦

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FACETED WOMAN: CARI MCPARTLAND

NAME: Cari McPartland
AGE: 47
POSITION: Social services director at the Salvation Army
FAMILY: Husband, Kelly

WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITH \$1,000 TO SPEND ON YOURSELF?

Join one of Ames' fitness centers, then hire a personal trainer. If there is any money left, I would purchase new clothes when I get into better shape.

CRAZIEST FASHION YOU EVER WORE:

I loved clogs and bell bottoms in the '70s, and we wore our hair pretty high with clothes like Madonna wore when I was in high school during the '80s, so our fashion was pretty interesting.

I NEVER LEAVE HOME WITHOUT:

I think I am like most people these days and won't leave home without my cell phone.

YOUR FAVORITE MOTTO:

"Do your absolute best, and have a good time!"

WHAT MAKES YOU FEEL CONFIDENT?

I'm confident in my ability to do my job as the social services director.

WHAT HAVE YOU ACCOMPLISHED THAT HAS MADE YOU PROUD?

In 2009, I was nominated then elected by my peers to the Ames Area Bowling Association Hall of Fame.

MY IDEA OF A NIGHTMARE JOB:

Anything outdoors, because of the extremes of hot and cold in Iowa.

FAVORITE WARDROBE STAPLE:

Hands down, it has to be sweat pants.

MY SIMPLEST PLEASURE:

My family purchased a trailer at Sandbar Beach Resort on Big Spirit Lake more



Cari McPartland after being inducted into the Ames Area Bowling Association Hall of Fame in 2009. SUBMITTED PHOTO

than 30 years ago. I enjoy going up there for a weekend with family or friends, enjoying the beautiful sunsets and sitting in front of the bonfire at night.

I AM THANKFUL FOR:

I am thankful to have a great family and friends whom I enjoy being with.

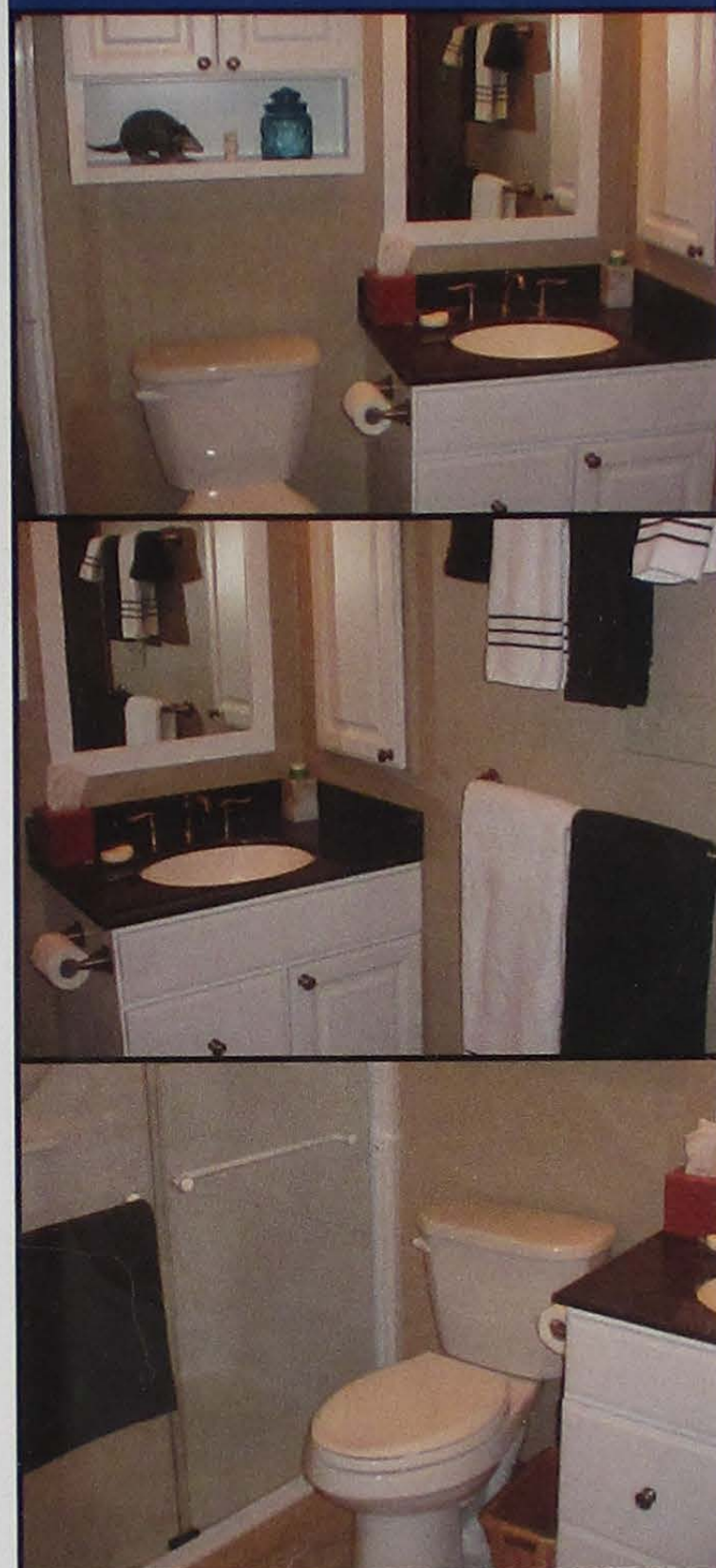
WHAT FINANCIAL ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE OTHER WOMEN?

Be involved. So frequently, I meet some women through my job who don't know how the family finances are managed and then are thrust into learning under duress. Knowing things like when/what bills need to be paid, what insurance you have and account information including passwords are all things that people really need to know about.

HOW DO YOU GIVE BACK TO YOUR COMMUNITY?

I am the president of the Legal Aid of Story County board of directors. I have been on the Board for about 10 years. Legal Aid provides legal representation in civil matters at low or no cost for income-eligible families of Story County. I am also the Ames vice president to the Ames Area Bowling Association board of directors. ❖

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Thank you,
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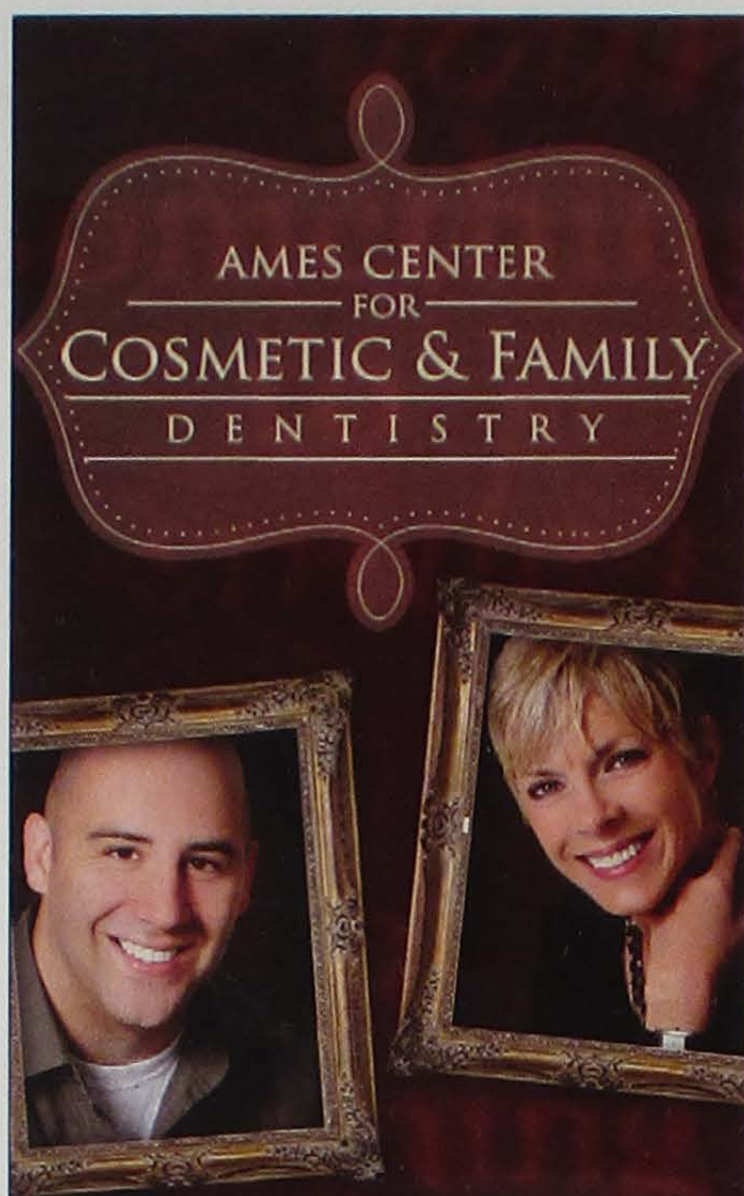
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and also knows a few commands in German.

"Tone of voice is definitely a big factor in training," Stella said.

Captain has both a working- and home-mode. Stella said when they are within five blocks of the hospital, Captain realizes where they are going and starts doing circles in the car. His excitement continues as they reach the parking lot and walk to the entrance of the hospital.

"The minute he walks through the door, he's right here," Stella said as she points to her side, "and he's working."

"He can sense when they need him and when they don't."

— Stella Chapman, owner of Captain

Stella and Captain's visits to Blank depend on if there are children at the hospital. Stella said she will call ahead to see if there are any children and then let the staff know when they will come for a visit. When they arrive at the hospital, they check in and get their own identification tags so hospital staff know who they are. Then they are told where they are going to go that day.

Captain relates best to children in the 2 to 10 age group, so a majority of the visits are spent with young children. Stella said he also gets along well with teenagers, but they are "not into him" as much as the younger patients. At first, some of the children are terrified of Captain because of his size. However, after Stella and Captain sit in the corner of the room for a while, the children eventually warm up to the gentle dog.

"They'll either inch toward him or he'll inch toward them. It's kind of cute," Stella said.

The children will do everything from watching movies to cuddling to coloring with Captain. One time, a little girl was coloring a picture and she would ask Captain what color she should use. Captain would then pick a crayon and push it toward her. The visits with the children will last anywhere from 30 minutes to several hours. One time, Captain spent nine hours with a child who was having a particularly hard time.

"It depends on how the kid is doing," Stella said. "If they're miserable the whole time they are at the hospital, then we try to stay with them longer."

Once in a while, Captain will "pick his own person," Stella said. When they were at the hospital where her son was receiving treatment, they walked past a room with a door that was partially open.

Captain pulled Stella into the room, where an 80-year-old woman was crying. She just found out her cancer was terminal and was waiting for her family to arrive. Captain went over to her as Stella was apologizing to the woman for entering her room. The woman was glad to see Captain and was in a better mood after spending time with him.

"He can sense when they need him and when they don't," Stella said.

He can also sense when there is something wrong with a patient. During one of the visits to a boy undergoing treatments at Blanks, the doctor was checking the patient while Captain and Stella were there. Captain kept nudging the doctor to get his attention as the doctor was looking at the boy's arm. Captain wouldn't let the doctor leave because he knew something was not right in the boy's arm. It was soon discovered the boy had a blood clot in his arm, and Captain was credited with finding it.

Stella said this is not surprising for the Weimaraner breed. In Germany, they are testing these dogs to see if they can detect early stages of cancer. The results have shown the dogs have been able to detect cancer cells even before machines can, she said.

Despite all the smiles and laughter Captain generates while spending time with the children, Stella admits the visits are not always easy, especially when they visit a child who has the same type of cancer her son had.

"Sometimes it's hard, especially when you know what it's like to lose a child," Stella said.

At the end of each visit, Captain and Stella leave the hospital knowing they have made at least one child's day a little better. For a while, the child can forget about all the needles, medications and machines and focus on a friendly, four-legged friend. ♦

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